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Summary

In the aftermath of World War II Page admonishes those at AT&T to do everything they can to get service to all who need it. As the company moves forward it aims to provide service for every person it possibly can, as quickly and cost-effective as it can. Page emphasizes the importance of truthfully disclosing and explaining what the company is doing and why there are delays in service. Employees are told not to take advantage of people or capitalize on the misfortune of others. The company should do the very best they can to serve the public's needs.

Key topics

Customer Service

Page Principles

Tell the truth

Prove it with action

What we think about held orders

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WHAT WE THINK ABOUT HELD ORDERS

Held orders are not just statistics on a sheet. They represent people and people we will be living with for the rest of our lives. They have been exceedingly tolerant. That has been one of the most impressive facts of the wartime. But what happens when they cease to be tolerant and how fast it happens are equally as impressive. In one place in the Bell System complaints rose 1000% in three months.

If people really believe that we are doing everything that can be done, I think they will still be friends of ours, for a while. But the second they suspect that we are taking their inconvenience easy, or letting their suffering save us some trouble, or money, there will be trouble for us aplenty.

This business has lived and grown successful and of good repute by giving service. It has given the public what it wanted when it wanted it and done it with efficiency and courtesy—and then invented better things and taught the public to want them and ask for them.

That is what made this business something more than just a business. It made it a good place to work, a good life to live, something with a little distinction.

It did its best to serve the public. That paid off when it was comparatively easy to do.

Well, not it is hard—what about it? What do we do? Shall we run the business for our convenience? Shall we run it to meet some long distance “prove in” rules? Shall we serve our engineering studies? Or shall we serve the public?

What is the objective? To give people the best possible service as cheaply as we could do it. But the “service” comes before the “cheap.” And not just to serve those we found it convenient to serve.

Our job is to serve every single person that we possibly can and get service to them as fast as we can. That may mean putting plant in and taking it out again in a little while.

What did we do after the hurricane? Did we wait until we had everything engineered for 1960? We did not. We go something going fast and improved it afterward.

Well, this is just like the hurricane, but a whole lot worse. What did we expect—to have the worst war in history and have it result in the millennium of ease and comfort? The phrase “the war is over” is a hallucination as far as we are concerned. The war has just got to our front. This is our big time, and if we are not going to throw away all the ideas of our history we are going to take off our coats and show the world what we can do in a fight.

Are we going to degrade service a bit for the many to give service to a few more? Sure we are. We are going to give everyone some service just as fast as it can be done, and we are going to tell everyone exactly what we are doing. It is the only just thing to do, and the public relations of this business are not as good as we think they are if we can’t manage to live with the truth and justice no matter how unpleasant the truth is.

This is not time for little faith, or halfway measures. It is time to strain every effort to give service, and a time of full explanation of what the facts are.

It is a time to increase our reputation by the energy and ingenuity with which we meet our difficulties and the complete sincerity of our efforts—and the complete frankness with which we tell the facts.

If this company has done everything humanly possible to give service we think we can say so in a way to keep our friends as well as our self-respect.

But if, because some people must wait some, we have let down and let more wait than need be, and wait longer than they had to, there is no way to make a good story of that. We won’t believe it ourselves and we can’t make anyone else believe it.

No one is asking us to save the last nickel. Take a vote. Ask the public, do you want telephones now or a little saving later and a perfect engineering record?

Maybe, we don't face those questions in those words. But we do face those questions. And I have no doubt what the answers are.

The question is how good a job do we do. How much of lasting satisfaction do we get out of recognizing the biggest and hardest job we every had and licking it.

If we see it for what it is we'll lick it and like licking it.